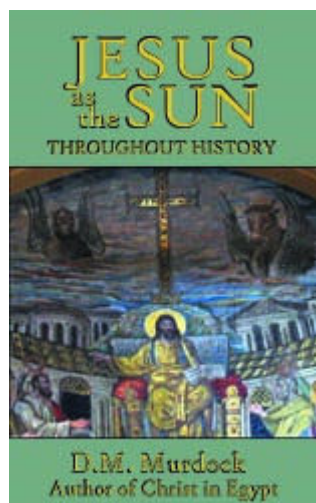


Jesus as the Sun throughout History



D.M. Murdock/Acharya S



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Jesus as the Sun throughout History

"The result of the Church's encounter with the sun-cults of antiquity was nothing less than the dethronement of Helios."

Dr. Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (93)

"Doctrinal Christianity may have dealt the final blow to the divinity of the Moon, since the symbolism in which Christ's divinity was clothed after his death came from the Sun. In the contemporary Hellenistic world, both the Greek Sun god Helios and the Persian and Roman Sun god Mithras portrayed the celestial drama of resurrection through the risen Sun, reborn from death every dawn and every midwinter at the winter solstice. As Mithras was called the *Sol Invictus*, so Christ was to be the new invincible Sun, whose birth was timed (four centuries after he died) to the winter solstice in the image of the reborn Sun—as was the birth of Mithras. Christ's God was beyond Sun and Moon as the transcendent Creator of the natural world, but the Sun and Moon played a crucial role in the Christian imagination through the complementary figures of Christ and Mary...."

Jules Cashford, "Sun and Moon in Christianity," *The Moon* (164)

In my books and articles, I present the evidence that many aspects of the gospel story about Jesus Christ, and of Christian tradition in general, represent motifs from older astrotheology and solar mythology, specifically reflecting legends and myths regarding the sun gods of antiquity. There remains much confusion concerning this subject, including erroneous claims that this equation of Jesus with the sun only started to be expressed during the 19th century. This contention that connecting Jesus to the sun constitutes a "modern" phenomenon is easily demonstrated to be false, through the study of ancient texts, including the Bible and works of the early Church fathers, as well as Christian traditions, rituals, architecture and artifacts. From a wide variety of sources, it is clear that associating, identifying and equating Christ with the sun began in ancient times and has continued abundantly over the many centuries since then.

The exploration of Christ as a solar figure includes a study of ancient sun worship not only in the Pagan world but also in Israel, as exhibited by the solar nature of Jesus's purported Father, the Israelite god Yahweh. Demonstrating the copious substantiation for Israelite sun worship, especially as concerns the main Jewish god, in *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel*, Rev. Dr. J. Glen Taylor, a theologian and professor of Old Testament and Biblical Proclamation at Wycliffe College, remarks:

This book is a slightly revised version of my doctoral dissertation entitled "Solar Worship in the Biblical World" which was submitted to the Graduate School of Yale University in the Spring of 1989. As may be judged from the title of that work, I had at one time planned to cover more territory than sun worship in ancient Israel, but found the material pertaining to ancient Israel so vast that I never got beyond it.¹

The description of *Yahweh and the Sun* states, "This challenging provocative book argues that there was in ancient Israel a considerable degree of overlap between the worship of the sun and of Yahweh—even that **Yahweh was worshipped as the sun** in some contexts."² As Rev. Dr. Taylor further says:

¹ Taylor, 7.

² Emphasis added.

Probably the most provocative issue related to the nature of sun worship in ancient Israel...is the specific claim that Yahweh was identified with the sun.³

In his tome, Taylor discusses Yahweh as a sun god—terming this adulation “solar Yahwism”—as reflected in the sun worship by Israelites described in the biblical texts of Deuteronomy, the Prophets, Job and the Psalms. He also addresses linguistic evidence as well as various archaeological finds that reveal Israelite sun worship, including artifacts such as sun disks and temple/shrine alignments.

The Bible

In the present analysis of Judeo-Christian astrotheological underpinnings, let us start therefore with the Old Testament, in which God is depicted as the creator of and power behind the sun, thus making the solar orb an expression of the Lord’s divinity—a notion not lost on the Israelitish peoples. To begin with, at Genesis 1:3, God is the creator of light: “And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”⁴ We also read at Genesis 1:14 about the Lord’s role as the power behind the celestial bodies: “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years...’” These lights, of course, are the sun, moon, stars and so on, all created by God.

In the book of Job, traditionally considered one of the oldest texts in the Bible, we find God reiterated as the power behind the sun, as at 9:7, which refers to him “who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars...” Job contains other astronomical, astrological or astrotheological knowledge, as in the discussion of the “Mazzaroth” or *Zodiac* at 38:22:

Can you lead forth the Maz’zaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children?

Strong’s Concordance (H4216) defines מַזְרֹת—*mazzaroth* or *mazzarah*—as “the 12 signs of the Zodiac and their 36 associated constellations.” The “Bear with its children” refers to the constellation of Arcturus or Ursa Major and the three stars in its tail.⁵ Following traditional dating, this scripture concerning the zodiac from Job would originate in the time before Moses purportedly gathered the 12 tribes of Israel, allegedly in the 13th century.⁶

In Jeremiah (31:35) as well, God is represented as the power behind the sun and moon:

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name...

The Lord as the power behind the sun and moon is exclaimed at Psalms 104:19: “Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.” Here the sun is personified in that it “knows” when to set. The sun is likewise personified and revered as a loyal friend at Judges 5:31: “So perish all thine enemies, O LORD! But thy friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.” The

³ Taylor, 20.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotes are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

⁵ McClintock, 381.

⁶ Scientific analysis places the actual writing of much of the Old Testament no earlier than the postexilic period, i.e., after the “Babylonian Captivity” in the 6th century. (See Finkelstein’s *The Bible Unearthed*.)

personification of the sun also occurs at Psalms 121:6 and 136:8, while at 148:3, the sun, moon and “stars of light” are anthropomorphized and commanded to praise God. This anthropomorphization can also be seen in Isaiah (13:10, 24:23). In the Greek Old Testament or Septuagint, the word for sun—ἥλιος or *helios*—is a masculine term; hence, the sun is referred to as “he” and “him” in various English translations, reflecting the ancient perception of the sun as an animate and generally male being.

More personification of celestial bodies occurs at Psalms 19:1-4, where we discover a paean to the heavens, who “declare the glory of God”:

...The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice [line] goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun...

The Hebrew word (H6957) translated in the RSV as “voice” is קו, transliterated as *qav* or *kav*, which Strong’s defines as “cord, line, measuring-line,” an astrological-sounding reference in this context, with anthropomorphized celestial elements depicted as “telling,” “proclaiming,” “speaking” and “declaring.” The word here for “tent” is אהל (H168) or *ohel*, also translated as “tabernacle,” specifically serving here as “the sacred tent of Jehovah (the tabernacle),” set up in the heavens for the sun.

The sun is also considered by biblical writers to be an important witness whose light exposes both justice and iniquity, the latter of which as at 2 Samuel 12:11-12:

Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

This transparency before the sun is repeatedly referred to throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, famed for saying that “there is nothing new under the sun.” (Ecc 1:9) The author of Ecclesiastes depicts himself as seeing the “place of judgment” and “place of righteousness” under the sun. (Ecc 3:16)

So important is the sun to the Israelites that at Psalms 113:3 the Lord’s name is to be praised during its daily excursion: “From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised!” In Isaiah (41:25, 45:6, 59:19) too is the equation of the Lord’s name being praised during the whole of the sun’s daily sojourn. The same can be found at Malachi 1:11: “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations...” Indeed, at Psalms 72:17 the Lord of Israel becomes so identified with the sun that “his fame continue[s] as long as the sun!”

The Lord’s solar imagery continues at Psalms 89:36: “His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me.” The reason for all the solar reverence becomes obvious and logical, when we read at Psalms 84:11:

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield.”

With such a sacred origin and with the pervasiveness of the astrotheological religion of their neighbors, Israelite sun worshipping understandably became prevalent, so much so that the biblical writers proscribe it on several occasions, such as at Deuteronomy 4:19:

And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

Lifting up one's eyes to the sun, etc., is something to beware of, implying that worship will be next. For this reason, evidently, Taylor cites Job 31:26 as addressing sun worship: "...if I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor..."⁷ Yet, these celestial bodies possess divine origins, as it is *God* who has "allotted to all peoples" the "host of heaven," including "the sun and the moon and the stars." Moreover, the Lord himself is a sun and is repeatedly identified with the sun in numerous ways.

At Deuteronomy 17:2-3, we read further about Israelites "whoring after" sun worship and astrotheology:

"If there is found among you, within any of your towns which the LORD your God gives you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden..."

The Israelites, however, cannot stop their sun worshipping, which is engaged in even by the kings and priests, and which must be suppressed, as at 2 Kings 23:5:

And he deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places at the cities of Judah and round about Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Ba'al, to the sun, and the moon, and the constellations, and all the host of the heavens.

The sun worship of the kings of Judah was so similar to that of their neighbors that they even possessed chariots and horses of the sun, like those depicted in Greek mythology concerning Helios and Apollo, as reflected at 2 Kings 23:11:

And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

The Israelite reverence of the sun was so intense that by Jeremiah's era (c. 625-565 BCE), the Jewish kings, princes, prophets and general inhabitants of Jerusalem continued to be portrayed as loving, serving and worshipping the host of heaven, including the sun and moon:

At that time, says the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its princes, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs; And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. (Jer 8:1-2)

Despite this apparent desecration of Jewish bones evidently because of astrotheological practices, Ezekiel (c. 586 BCE) related that the Israelites/Hebrews/ Jews persisted in worshipping the sun, as at 8:16:

And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD; and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east.

⁷ Taylor, 19fn.

In this scripture and elsewhere, it is not just the common people but also the very priests themselves who are engaging in sun worship.

As concerns the prevalence of solar Yahwism in ancient Israel, Dr. J. Glen Taylor concludes:

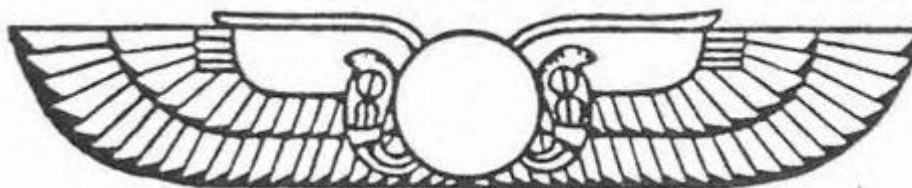
Several lines of evidence, both archaeological and biblical, bear witness to a close relationship between Yahweh and the sun. The nature of that association is such that often a "solar" character was presumed for Yahweh. Indeed, at many points the sun actually represented Yahweh as a kind of "icon." Thus, in at least the vast majority of cases, biblical passages which refer to sun worship in Israel do not refer to a foreign phenomenon borrowed by idolatrous Israelites, but to a Yahwistic phenomenon which Deuteronomistic theology came to look upon as idolatrous.... an association between Yahweh and the sun was not limited to one or two obscure contexts, but was remarkably well integrated into the religion of ancient Israel.⁸

Hence, the sun was worshipped by the Israelites, who associated it with their tribal god Yahweh. Indeed, we read from the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (1st cent. BCE) that Yahweh is the same as the god Iao,⁹ while, according to Dr. Roelof van den Broek, a professor of Christian History at the University of Utrecht, "Iao stood for the Sun."¹⁰ Concerning the Iao-Yahweh connection, Dr. Campbell Bonner, head of Classics at the University of Michigan, relates:

As to the meaning of Iao, there can be no doubt, especially since the subject was thoroughly investigated by Graf von Baudission; and, in fact, the combination of *Iao Σαβαωθ Αδωναι*, "JHVH of hosts, Lord," which is common on both amulets and papyri, is convincing in itself.¹¹

As cited by Roman historian Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius (fl. c. 430 AD/CE), the identification of JHVH/Iao with the sun also appeared in the work of Latin writer Cornelius Labeo (2nd-3rd cents. AD/CE), who in discussing the mysteries and the oracle of Apollo at Claros explained "splendid" Iao as the "supreme god of all gods" who is Hades in winter, Zeus in spring, the Sun in summer and Iao in the fall.¹²

Like Father, like son, and, indeed, "the Gnostics *did* use the name of IAO to express Jesus Christ" as well.¹³ The connection between Jesus and the sun is first evidenced in the OT book of Malachi (4:2), which immediately precedes the New Testament and in which the author refers to the "Sun of Righteousness" who will "arise with healing in his wings." This scripture, which appears in the last chapter before the Gospel of Matthew, sounds much like the winged solar disc of Babylon and Egypt.



⁸ Taylor, 257.

⁹ Diodorus, I, 2, 94; Murphy, 120.

¹⁰ Quispel, 39.

¹¹ Bonner, 30.

¹² MacMullen, 87; Smith, M.S., 277.

¹³ Colenso, 319.

“The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his wings.”

This passage in Malachi is perceived as a reference to the coming messiah, Jesus Christ. In this regard, this clearly solar appellation “Sun of Righteousness” is repeated many times by early Church fathers as being applicable to Christ. In Malachi’s original Hebrew, the word for “sun” is שמש—*shemesh* or *shamash*—and in the Greek Old Testament/Septuagint it is ηλιος—*helios*—both names of the sun god. Hence, “Sun of Righteousness” could be translated as “Shamash Righteousness” or “Helios Justice,” who will arise as the “Anointed One by whom Yahweh saves,” the meaning of the words “Christ” and “Jesus.”

New Testament Solar Imagery

By the time of the New Testament, God the Father’s role as the power behind the sun remained intact, as at Matthew 5:45: “...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good...” In fact, so holy is the solar orb that *the Christian righteous are to become as the sun*, as at Matthew 13:43: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.” Let him who has ears hear, indeed.

In the Gospel of Luke (1:78), Christ’s very advent is depicted as a visitation from the “dayspring on high”: “Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us...” The word for “dayspring” or “day” in the original Greek is ανατολη or *anatole*, which means “sunrise, east.” In reference to this scripture, Rev. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) states:

Christ is the Morning Light, the rising Sun, Mal. 4:2¹⁴

Christ’s solar imagery continues in the New Testament, as at John 1:9: “The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.” The “true light” is also discussed at John 8:12:

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Jesus’s role as the “light of the world” and “Sun of Righteousness” is elucidated at Matthew 17:2:

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.

Another sign of this equation of Christ with the sun comes at his death, during which, naturally, the sun darkens, as depicted at Luke 23:45. At Mark 16:2, the empty tomb is discovered at *sunrise* on *Sunday*, sounding much like a typical solar myth—a more logical explanation for this motif than the actual, physical resurrection from the dead of a Jewish man 2,000 years ago.

In Acts (26:13ff), we discover that the conversion of St. Paul occurs when he sees in “heaven”—in other words, *the sky*—a *blinding light*, which is allegedly Jesus Christ. Paul also expresses solar imagery at 2 Corinthians 4:6:

For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

¹⁴ Jenkins, 417.

As it was in Matthew, the face of Christ as the sun is likewise revealed in the biblical book of Revelation (1:16):

...in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Also in Revelation (1:7), we read about Jesus: "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him," which is true not of a person but certainly of the material sun.¹⁵

Jesus's astrotheological nature is further indicated at Revelation 22:16, in which he is equated with the "bright morning star":

"I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."

The "bright morning star" is typically said to be the planet Venus as at Isaiah 14:12, but it could also refer to the sun itself.

To paraphrase New Testament sentiment concerning Christ:

"I am the light of the world that every eye will see."

If every eye can see this "light of the world," it is understandable that many individuals beginning in ancient times have believed Jesus Christ to be the solar orb itself, as they had with numerous gods preceding his purported advent, including his supposed Father, Yahweh. It is not only natural but also logical that thousands of people in the earliest days of Christianity would have believed Christ to be the same as the gods they were already worshipping, the bulk of which possessed solar attributes and were often considered to be sun gods to a significant extent.

The Ancient Astrotheological Religion

In this regard, the early Christian Church fathers were quite cognizant of the astrotheological nature of other religions, remarking, for instance, as does Church father Tertullian (fl. 190-220) concerning the Egyptians (*Ad Nationes*, II, 2): "Most of the Egyptians believe that there are four gods—the Sun and the Moon, the Heaven and the Earth."¹⁶ In the same book (*Ad Nationes*, II, 5), Tertullian further demonstrates his knowledge of the astrotheology of the ancients:

...men have accounted as gods—the sun, because it imparts from itself the light of day, ripens the fruit with its warmth, and measures the year with its stated periods;

¹⁵ In Revelation we also find a peculiar reference to Jesus as "*the Amen*," which is supposedly indicative of the Old Testament term "aman" or "amen" (Strong's H534), an adverb meaning "So be it" and "Verily." However, over the years has occurred a debate concerning the use of this term as a *noun* in Revelation to describe Jesus, with the contention that in reality the word reflects the name of the Egyptian "hidden god" Amen, Amun, Amon or Ammon. Naturally, this Egyptian god—as "hidden," perceived to be the power behind the sun, the same as the cosmic Yahweh—possesses solar attributes. Interestingly, the root of the name "Amon" (H526), as in the "children of Amon" (Nehemiah 7:59), is *aman* (H539), the same as is translated as "amen." Moreover, the double phrase "Amen, amen" appears 25 times in the Gospel of John "and nowhere else" in the NT—a noteworthy fact because John is the most Egyptian text of the canon and was clearly written for an Egyptian audience. As Revelation is considered to have been written by John, it is logical to suggest that the inclusion of Christ as "the Amen" was meant to appeal to the same Egyptian audience. (For an extensive analysis of the Egyptian elements of the Gospel of John, see my book *Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection*.)

¹⁶ Roberts, *ANCL*, XI, 457.

the moon, which is at once the solace of the night and the controller of the months by its governance; the stars also, certain indications as they are of those seasons which are to be observed in the tillage of our fields; lastly, the very heaven also under which, and the earth over which, as well as the intermediate space within which, all things conspire together for the good of man.¹⁷

In his "Sermon 27: On the Feast of the Nativity" (VII), Pope Leo the Great (c. 400-461) adamantly criticizes the prevalent nature worship and astrotheology, which he states was engaged in by both Pagans and Christians:

IV. The foolish practice of some who turn to the sun and bow to it is reprehensible

From such a system of teaching proceeds also the ungodly practice of certain foolish folk who worship the sun as it rises at the beginning of daylight from elevated positions: even some Christians think it is so proper to do this that, before entering the blessed Apostle Peter's basilica, which is dedicated to the One Living and true God, when they have mounted the steps which lead to the raised platform, they turn round and bow themselves towards the rising sun and with bent neck do homage to its brilliant orb. We are full of grief and vexation that this should happen, which is partly due to the fault of ignorance and partly to the spirit of heathenism: because although some of them do perhaps worship the Creator of that fair light rather than the Light itself, which is His creature, yet we must abstain even from the appearance of this observance: for if one who has abandoned the worship of gods, finds it in our own worship, will he not hark back again to this fragment of his old superstition, as if it were allowable, when he sees it to be common both to Christians and to infidels?

V. The sun and moon were created for use, not for worship...¹⁸

It is important to emphasize that Pope Leo specifically relates that "even some Christians think it is so proper to do this," referring to the worship of the sun!

The Sun of Righteousness/Justice, the True Sun, etc.

Early Christian sun worship is logical, as the impression given by Malachi and the New Testament of Christ as the sun was built upon by the Christian authorities themselves, including Clement of Alexandria (150?-215?), one of several early Church fathers and other orthodox Christians who called Jesus Christ the "Sun of Righteousness," the "true Sun," "our Sun," and so on. In his *Exhortation to the Heathen* (IX), Clement refers to Christ as the "Sun of the Resurrection":

...and the Lord, with ceaseless assiduity, exhorts, terrifies, urges, rouses, admonishes; He awakes from the sleep of darkness, and raises up those who have wandered in error. "Awake," He says, "thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"—Christ, the Sun of the Resurrection, He "who was born before the morning star," and with His beams bestows life.¹⁹

Regarding the "Sun of Righteousness," Clement further states (XI):

But night fears the light, and hiding itself in terror, gives place to the day of the Lord. Sleepless light is now over all, and the west has given credence to the east. For "the Sun of Righteousness," who drives His chariot over all, pervades equally all humanity, like "His Father, who makes His sun to rise on all men," and distils on them the dew of the truth. He hath changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross brought life to death.²⁰

¹⁷ Roberts, *ANF*, III, 133.

¹⁸ Schaff, *NPNF*, XII, 140.

¹⁹ Roberts, *ANF*, II, 196.

²⁰ Wilson, W., 102; Roberts, *ANF*, II, 203.

Concerning these Clementine paragraphs, in my book *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled*, I write:

The solar imagery could not be clearer: The sun of the resurrection, with his life-bestowing beams, rising or being born again each morning, awaking from the darkness, with the night fearing his light and ceding to his day. Furthermore, "sleepless light" or *daylight* pervades, and the west "gives credence to the east," as Jesus the Righteous Sun rises in his chariot, the same as Surya, Helios, Apollo, Mithra and Krishna, etc.²¹

With such solar imagery from the early days of Christianity, in both the Bible and Church fathers, it is easy to understand why Christ was taken to be the same "God Sun" as these other solar figures, widely worshipped throughout the known world of the time.

Adding to this astrotheological imagery within Christianity, in his book *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (25.2), Clement cites the Valentinian Gnostic Theodotus (fl. 180) as having equated the 12 disciples with the zodiacal signs: "He says the Apostles were substituted for the twelve signs of the Zodiac."²² This equation of the Christian 12 with the zodiac, and consequently Jesus with the "central sun," did not end in the second century, as we shall see.

Other early Church fathers who refer to Jesus as the "Sun of Righteousness" or "Sun of Justice" include Origen (c. 185-254), Eusebius (c. 263-c. 339), Athanasius (c. 293-373), Basil (c. 329-379), the author of the Acts of Philip (c. mid to late 4th cent.), Chrysostom (c. 347-407), Jerome (c. 347-420), Augustine (354-430) and Theodoret (c. 393-c. 457). The Church fathers also called their god Jesus the "True Sun," "Sol Noster"—*our Sun*—"Sol Victor" and "Sun of the soul," all of which appellations make contentions of early Christian sun worship comprehensible. Concerning these various Church fathers, in my book *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, I relate:

Christ was frequently identified as and/or with the sun by other early orthodox Christian fathers, including St. Cyprian (d. 258), who "spoke of Christ as the true sun (sol verus)," and St. Ambrose (c. 338-397), Bishop of Milan, who said of Christ, "He is our new sun." Other Church fathers who identified Christ with, if not as, the sun include St. Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-c. 389), and St. Zeno of Verona (d. c. 375), who "calls Christ 'Sol noster, sol verus.'" Moreover, this overt Christian sun-worship was not a short-lived aberration, as Christian proponents would portray it.... "Leo the Great in his day (440-461) says that it was the custom of many Christians to stand on the steps of the Church of St. Peter and pay homage to the Sun by obeisance and prayers."²³

In his "Treatise 4: On the Lord's Prayer," St. Cyprian says, "Also the prophet Malachi testifies that He is called the Sun..."²⁴ In his *Letter 1*, Athanasius refers to Christ as "the Sun of Righteousness, causing His divine beams to rise upon us..."²⁵ In his *Homily 4 on First Thessalonians*, Chrysostom comments, "But let us invoke the *Sun of Righteousness*, let us entreat Him to send His beams upon us..."²⁶ In his hymns, Christian poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (c. 348-c. 413) "speaks of Christ as the

²¹ Acharya, *SOG*, 449.

²² Clement, 59.

²³ Acharya, *CC*, 158.

²⁴ Roberts, *ANF*, V, 457.

²⁵ Schaff, *NPNF*, IV, 506.

²⁶ Schaff, *NPNF*, XIII, 343.

sun that never sets, never is obscured by clouds..."²⁷ In his "Sermon 31.2," St. Maximus of Turin (c. 380-c.465) remarks, "But we read of the Savior that He Himself is the sun of justice...."²⁸ In "Sermon 62," subtitled "On the Birthday of Our Lord Jesus Christ," Maximus states, "Well it is that people frequently call this day of the Lord's birth 'the new sun'..."²⁹

In the fifth century, famed St. Patrick (c. 390 – 460) too deemed Christ the "true sun":

"The true sun is Christ," St. Patrick said to his heathen Celts, an identification still present in seventeenth-century England, when a priest new to the English parish of Kidderminster found that some of his flock "thought Christ was the sun...and the Holy Ghost was the moon." The early Christian fathers, Ambrose and Augustine, initially envisaged Christ as the Sun, and the "suffering" Church as the Moon, *Luna patiens*, who was the true Luna...³⁰

In his *Ecclesiastical History* (V, XXI), speaking of the "mystical reason" for Easter, the Catholic monk Venerable Bede (c. 672-735) says:

We are commanded to observe the full moon of the Paschal month after the vernal equinox, to the end, that the sun may first make the day longer than the night, and then the moon may afford the world her full orb of light; inasmuch as first "the sun of righteousness, in whose wings is salvation," that is, our Lord Jesus, by the triumph of his resurrection, dispelled all the darkness of death, and so ascending into heaven, filled his Church, which is often signified by the name of the moon...³¹

Regarding this motif and its appearance in early Christianity, theologian Dr. Thomas O'Loughlin of the University of Wales concludes:

Christ as "the sun" or "the true sun" is a complex theme in early Christian writing which has survived in one or two places in the Latin liturgy even down to modern times. The theme uses a great variety of scriptural passages to develop its mythological coherence such as Matt. 13:42; 17:2; and Rev. 22:5...³²

Other Jewish and Christian writings that refer to the coming messiah or Christ in solar terms include a Christian text from Nag Hammadi called *The Teachings of Silvanus* (c. 150-c. 200), in which the author calls Christ the "true light and the sun of life."³³ Concerning *Silvanus* ("Sil") and other texts, Dr. Jan Zandee, a professor emeritus at the University of Utrecht, comments:

Christ as the shining sun occurs in the early hymn quoted by Paul (*Eph* 5, 14), "Christ will shine upon you." Christ's epiphany is depicted as a sunrise, "He shall shine forth as the sun on earth, and shall remove all darkness from under heaven" (*Test. Levi* XVIII,3.4). Christ's epiphany inaugurates a struggle between light and darkness. "As the sun is the joy to them who seek its daybreak, so is my joy in the Lord; because he is my sun, and his rays have lifted me up, and his light has dismissed all darkness from my faith..." (*Od. Sol.* XV,1.2.5). Christ spreading like the sun means illumination for the human mind.... Christ says of his final *parousia*, "I shall come like the sun when it is risen..." (*Ep. Ap.* 16(27)). There might be some attempt here to vie with the solar cult of the Hellenistic world....

²⁷ Biese, 43.

²⁸ Maximus/Ramsey, 76.

²⁹ Maximus/Ramsey, 152.

³⁰ Cashford, 164; O'Loughlin, 171.

³¹ Bede/Giles, 273.

³² O'Loughlin, 171.

³³ Robinson, 353.

In *Sil* the imagery of Christ as the sun refers to his omnipresence... Finally, it should be noted that, in the OT, God is symbolically called "Sun" (*Ps.* 84,12; 89,37; *Mal.* 4,2).³⁴

Reference here is made to the apostle Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (c. 110-70 BCE),³⁵ the Odes of Solomon (c. 200 AD/CE?) and the Epistle of the Apostles (c. 160 AD/CE),³⁶ among other texts.

So pervasive was Christian solar imagery that in his "Autolytus" (II, IV), Bishop Theophilus (c. 180) of Antioch described the sun as a "type of God":

...For the sun is a type of God, and the moon of man. And as the sun far surpasses the moon in power and glory, so far does God surpass man. And as the sun remains ever full, never becoming less, so does God always abide perfect, being full of all power, and understanding, and wisdom, and immortality, and all good. But the moon wanes monthly, and in a manner dies, being a type of man; then it is born again, and is crescent, for a pattern of future resurrection.

As we can see, this Christian authority has no problem equating the sun with God and describing the moon's monthly phases as epitomizing "a pattern of future resurrection," much like that found in the gospel story of Jesus. This type of insight reflects *astrotheological* thinking, so prevalent in other religions surrounding Christianity at the time.

Regarding the ancient religions in Rome and their relationship to Christianity, in *Dante the Maker*, published by Routledge, Oxford Reader William Anderson states:

There were enough points of concord...with the new religions, such as Mithraism coming from the East, which infiltrated among the soldiers of the Roman army, to make the sun cult one that fitted in well with the symbolism of most religions, even, on the face of it, with Christianity, whose adherents spoke of Christ as the Sun of Truth, Sun of Resurrection, and Sun of Salvation, however stubbornly they might deny the link.³⁷

Despite the denials, it is obvious that the early Christians themselves were well aware of the connection between Jesus and the sun. So strong with this association that anthropologist Dr. Robert Briffault declared: "Christ was always assimilated to the sun."³⁸

Church Father Tertullian (fl. 190-220)

All of this solar imagery from the earliest days of the true formation of Christianity onward has led to "stubborn denials," as early as the late second century, when Tertullian was forced repeatedly to address the claim that Christianity itself represented sun worship. Discussing the "possible influence of some pagan veneration of the solar disk" upon Christianity, Dr. Eviatar Zerubavel, a professor at Rutgers University, asks, "After all, is it a mere coincidence that, around the turn of the third century, we find the Christian apologist Tertullian explicitly defending the Church against the accusation that its Sunday observance had actually originated in some pagan sun cult?"³⁹

³⁴ Quispel, 532-533. The scriptures from Psalms should refer to 84:11 and 89:36.

³⁵ Barton, 309.

³⁶ James, xxi.

³⁷ Anderson, 289.

³⁸ Briffault, 366.

³⁹ Zerubavel, 25.

Tertullian's discussion of purported Christian sun worship was so clear that in its entry for "Tertullian" the *Catholic Encyclopedia* paraphrases the rebuttal in his book *Ad Nationes* thus:

You say we worship the sun; so do you.⁴⁰

In *Ad Nationes* (I, XIII, 1), Tertullian writes:

THE CHARGE OF WORSHIPPING THE SUN MET BY A RETORT.

Others, with greater regard to good manners, it must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the east, or because we make Sunday a day of festivity.⁴¹

In the same book, Tertullian says to the Pagans (as also paraphrased by *CE*): "...your gods are images made on a cross framework, so you worship crosses."

In his *Apology against the Heathen* (XVI), Tertullian likewise discusses the Pagan veneration of the cross, as well as the belief that Christians were sun worshippers:

...But ye worship victories also, when, in your triumphs, crosses form the inside of the trophies. The whole religion of the camp is a worshipping of the standards above all the gods. All those rows of images on your standards are the appendages of crosses; those hangings on your standards and banners are the robes of crosses.... Others certainly, with greater semblance of nature and of truth, believe the sun to be our God. If this be so, we must be ranked with the Persians; though we worship not the sun painted on a piece of linen, because in truth we have himself in his own hemisphere. Lastly, this suspicion ariseth from hence, because it is well known that we pray towards the quarter of the east. But most of yourselves too, with an affectation of sometimes worshipping the heavenly bodies also, move your lips towards the rising of the sun...⁴²

Naturally, Tertullian wished to *deny* that Christians were sun worshippers, but the charge was clearly laid before him, again, as early as the end of the second century.

Concerning Tertullian, in *Suns of God*, I remark:

Despite his protestations, in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (XLIX), Tertullian referred to Paul's comments at 1 Cor. 15:21 and compared the "glory of the sun" to that of Christ:

In like manner does he take examples from the heavenly bodies: "There is one glory of the sun" (that is, of Christ), "and another glory of the moon" (that is, of the Church), "and another glory of the stars" (in other words, of the seed of Abraham).

Another Christian authority who compares this "glory of the sun" to that of Christ is Church father Archelaus (c. 277), who in *The Acts of the Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes* refers to "the true Sun, who is our Saviour."⁴³

Clementine Homilies (c. 250)

Despite the attempts to create distance between Christianity and sun worship, the Clementine Homilies, falsely ascribed to Clement of Rome (fl. 96), date to possibly "the first half of the third century" and, according to Dr. James Hastings's entry for "Christmas" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "show a clear tendency to

⁴⁰ *CE*, XIV, 521.

⁴¹ Roberts, *ANCL*, 449-450.

⁴² Dodgson, 38.

⁴³ Archelaus, 63.

equate Jesus with the sun, and with the solar year."⁴⁴ In book 1, chapter 6, the Homilies author discusses the "rise" of the "good tidings," i.e., Jesus and his gospel, as having occurred in the "spring-time." About this passage, Dr. Hastings remarks, "This seems most naturally to mean that the writer dated the Nativity at the vernal equinox...though it might possibly refer to the first appearance of Jesus in public." Hastings continues, "The 'solar' idea also is clearly indicated at ii. 23..." The Clementine passage at 2.23 is translated as follows:

...There was one John, a day-baptist, who was also, according to the method of combination, the forerunner of our Lord Jesus; and as the Lord had twelve apostles, bearing the number of the twelve months of the sun, so also he, *John*, had thirty chief men, fulfilling the monthly reckoning of the moon...⁴⁵

As we can see, in this text evidently dating to around 250, the 12 apostles are equated with the months, while Jesus is identified therefore with the sun, adding to the earlier contention by Theodotus that the 12 represented the signs of the zodiac. In the first century before the common era, Diodorus stated that Moses created the 12 tribes because there are 12 months in the year.⁴⁶ The Jewish writers Philo (20 BCE-50 AD/CE) and Josephus (37-c. 100 AD/CE) equated the 12 tribes with the zodiacal signs.⁴⁷ As we know from the New Testament (Matthew 19:28) and Christian tradition, Jesus supposedly took on 12 disciples as a representation of the 12 tribes,⁴⁸ which in turn reflect the months and signs of the zodiac.

John the Baptist has a *lunar* role in Pseudo-Clement's mind, while his *solar* role is laid out in the New Testament, at John 3:30, where the Baptist says: "He must increase, but I must decrease." The meaning of this peculiar statement is reflected in the placement by the Catholic Church of the Baptist's nativity on June 24th, six months before the traditional date of Jesus's birth at midnight on December 24th, based on Luke 1:28, which essentially depicts John as being six months older than Jesus. These times of the year, of course, represent the periods of the summer and winter solstices, respectively, and as the summer sun (John) decreases, so must the winter sun (Jesus) increase.⁴⁹ Obviously, this astrotheological information was known within the early Catholic Church.

St. Ambrose (c. 338-397)

The addressing of Christ as the sun has continued for centuries, as evidenced by various hymns, such as "Hymnus Ad Matutinam" by Catholic saint Ambrose, in which he refers to "Verusque Sol," the "True Sun."⁵⁰ In *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, in a chapter entitled, "The Christian Mystery of Sun and Moon," Christian theologian Dr. Hugo Rahner, a president of Innsbruck University, relates:

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, quotes [the philosopher Secundus] on one occasion, and in following up his quotation, boldly exploits the feelings they arouse in the sensitive pagan in order to win followers for Christ. "When thou seest the sun," he says, "think

⁴⁴ Hastings, 607.

⁴⁵ Roberts, *ANF*, VIII, 233.

⁴⁶ Diodorus/Valesius, 563.

⁴⁷ Philo, "On the Life of Moses" (12); Philo/Yonge, 99. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.8; Whitson, 75.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Evans, 363.

⁴⁹ The solstices and equinoxes have traditionally been perceived as three-day periods or *triduum*s, beginning on the 21st or 22nd and ending on the 24th or 25th of the month.

⁵⁰ Wieland, 38.

of its Lord!"... One could trace the development of the same "tutoring for Christ" (Gal. 3. 24) in all the sun-cults of Rome and Italy...⁵¹

After discussing the sun worship of the peoples around the Mediterranean, Dr. Rahner's purpose in this chapter is to "show how Christianity both rejected and absorbed the light of this solar devotion..."⁵² It is clear that early Christian authorities were not only conscious of Pagan sun worship but that they did not hesitate to emphasize Christ's solar nature in order to win converts. As Oxford historian Dr. Chaim Raphael says, "Nor, indeed, did Christianity feel that if pagans saw Christ as the Sun-God, this image had to be ruled out too forcefully at the beginning."⁵³ Hence, Jesus as the sun was repeatedly stressed not only by non-Christians but also by Christians from the onset of Christianity.

St. Augustine (354-430)

The contention of Christian sun worshipping not only emerged early in Christian history but also lingered well into the fifth century, as St. Augustine was compelled to address it as well, in his "Tractate on the Gospel of John" (XXXIV, 2):

I think that what the Lord says, "I am the light of the world," is clear to those that have eyes, by which they are made partakers of this light: but they who have not eyes except in the flesh alone, wonder at what is said by the Lord Jesus Christ, "I am the light of the world." And perhaps there may not be wanting some one too who says with himself: **Whether perhaps the Lord Christ is that sun which by its rising and setting causes the day? For there have not been wanting heretics who thought this. The Manichaeans have supposed that the Lord Christ is that sun which is visible to carnal eyes, exposed and public to be seen, not only by men, but by the beasts.** But the right faith of the Catholic Church rejects such a fiction, and perceives it to be a devilish doctrine: not only by believing acknowledges it to be such, but in the case of whom it can, proves it even by reasoning. Let us therefore reject this kind of error, which the Holy Church has anathematized from the beginning. Let us not suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ is this sun which we see rising from the east, setting in the west; to whose course succeeds night, whose rays are obscured by a cloud, which removes from place to place by a set motion: the Lord Christ is not such a thing as this. The Lord Christ is not the sun that was made, but He by whom the sun was made. For "all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made."⁵⁴

It is evident from this paragraph and Augustine's protestations that there were many "heretics" who believed that Jesus Christ was the actual, physical sun. This group includes the heretical Christian sect of the Manichaeans:

"The Manichaeans have supposed that the Lord Christ is that sun which is visible to carnal eyes, exposed and public to be seen, not only by men, but by the beasts."

Augustine also states that this "error" was anathematized or denounced by the Holy Church *from the beginning*. When exactly "the beginning" occurred depends on when we perceive the "Holy Church" to have been created—was it at the end of the second century, with the formal establishment of the Catholic Church, or was it when Jesus Christ allegedly walked the earth? In any event, the "error" of equating Jesus Christ with the material "light of the world" which "every eye will see" happened in the

⁵¹ Rahner, 91-92.

⁵² Rahner, 90.

⁵³ Raphael, 187.

⁵⁴ Augustine, 200. Emph. added.

earliest times of Christianity, many centuries before the modern era. Augustine's discussion confirms that the notion of Christ as the actual, physical sun was widely held, evidenced by the Church father's need to denounce the claim in no uncertain terms.

In his *Contra Faustum* (XIV, 11), Augustine likewise asserts that the Manicheans—again considered a heretical *Christian* sect⁵⁵—worshipped the sun: "As there is an unconscious worship of idols and devils in the fanciful legends of the Manichæans, so they knowingly serve the creature in their worship of the sun and moon."⁵⁶ Augustine was in a position to know that the Manicheans viewed Christ as the sun, since he was originally one of them, as he declares in his "Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichæus."⁵⁷

The Manichæans/Manicheans

The Manicheans were thus known for equating Jesus with the material sun, beginning in the third century, long before modern times, and were deemed "sun worshippers" because of this connection. This sect was derived purportedly from the Gnostic heresiarch Manes (c. 210-275), who "regarded Christ as 'the Sun of this world'..."⁵⁸ In order to become orthodox Christians, the Manicheans were forced to recite an oath denouncing their views that Christ was the sun.⁵⁹ In *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, Dr. John Block Friedman, a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois, cites this ancient oath or "anathema against heretics," in which the speaker remarks: "**I curse those who say that Christ is the sun and those who pray to the sun.**"⁶⁰ This anathema or denunciation is also included by Dr. Friedman in the original Greek:

αναθεματιζω τους τον Χριστον λεγοντας ειναι τον ηλιον και ευχομενους τω ηλιω.⁶¹

The citation provided by Friedman for this anathema is J.B. Cotelerius, *Patrum Qui Temporibus Apostolicis Floruerunt Opera* (Antwerp, 1698), I, 538. This text of patristic writings compiled in the 17th century by Protestant minister and Catholic theologian Jean Baptiste Cotelier aka Cotelerius includes the works of early Church fathers such as Barnabas, Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp.

Despite their prohibition and suppression, these sun-worshipping heretics survived for hundreds of years, as exemplified by an Armenian Christian-Manichean sect from the 8th to 9th centuries called the Paulicians, some of whom "were believed to regard Jesus Christ as the sun."⁶²

These contentions regarding the Manicheans and others can be found in my book *The Christ Conspiracy*, published in 1999. Thus, the claim that Jesus as the sun was developed only during the 19th century was shown to be false already a decade ago.

⁵⁵ Olshausen, 307.

⁵⁶ Schaff, *NPNF*, IV (1887), 210.

⁵⁷ Schaff, *NPNF*, IV (1887), 130.

⁵⁸ Martin, 83.

⁵⁹ Acharya, CC, 159, citing *Cotelerii Patres Apostolici*, I, 543.

⁶⁰ Friedman, 222.

⁶¹ Friedman, 222.

⁶² Nicolle, 33.

The Heliognosti or “Sun Knowers”

In his discussion of the Manicheans, Friedman also includes a note concerning a sect called the “Heliognostics” or “Sun Knowers,” addressed in ancient times as well. Concerning this group of “heretics,” archaeologist and historian Dr. Franz V.M. Cumont, a professor at the University of Ghent, remarks:

The *Heliognostae* or *Deinvictiaci* who, in Gaul, attempted to assimilate the native Mercury with the Egyptian Thoth...were Christian gnostics.⁶³

According to the *Harvard Theological Review*, these Christian Heliognosti were of *Jewish*, not Pagan, ancestry.⁶⁴

Regarding the Heliognostics, in *The Vatican and Its Treasures*, Dr. Maurizio Fagiolo Dell’Arco, a professor at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma, remarks:

The Church Fathers had to fight long and hard to combat the latent “heliolatry,” which constantly burst out in heretical movements (the Heliognostics or *Deinvictiaci* in Gaul) or in superstitious rites.⁶⁵

The word “heliolatry” means “sun worship,” and it is clear from this comment that it was *Christian* “heretics” who were engaged in it, being called “Heliognostics/Heliognosti/Heliognostae” as well as “Deinvictiaci,” the latter word referring to the name of the Roman sun god Sol Invictus—the Unconquered Sun—also cited as “Mithra.”⁶⁶ It bears repeating that Dr. Dell’Arco says the Church fathers were forced to “fight long and hard” to battle this *Christian* sun worship, which *constantly* made its appearance through the ages.

The original statement concerning the sun-worshipping *Christian heretics* the Heliognostics is related by the Christian Bishop Filastrius/Philaster (d. 397), who in his *Diversarum hereseon* (c. 383), book 10, states:

Alii autem sunt Heliognosti, qui et Deinvictiaci dicuntur, solem adorantes, atque dicentes solem scire omnia quae dei sunt, homines etiam non alium nisi solem inluminare, solemque eis praeberere omnia nutrimenta, non cognoscentes quod in servitute positus cursum suum peragrat a deo patre per Christum dominum in sancto spiritu statutum cottidie [quotidie], de quo scriptum est: Qui dicit soli oriri, et oritur, et non oriri, et non oritur.⁶⁷

This fascinating passage about Christian sun worship from this early Church father is not recounted in online encyclopedias and cannot easily be found in any English translation.

Dr. Franciscus Franz Oehler suggests that the “scriptum” referred to by Philaster is Job 9:7, which, again, discusses him “who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars...” Oehler also cites Genesis 1:3, 1:14, et seq., and 2 Corinthians 4:6, previously referred to above.

Another relevant testimony relates that “not only the Heliognostics and heretics do this, but the Christians as well, who, abandoning their faith, mingle with the heretics.”⁶⁸ In any event, in the Heliognostics we have a Christian sect of sun

⁶³ Cumont, 233.

⁶⁴ *Harvard Theological Review*, 150.

⁶⁵ Dell’Arco, 14.

⁶⁶ *Hesperia*, 476.

⁶⁷ Marx, 5; see also Oehler, 13.

⁶⁸ Friedman, 222, citing PG 86, 453 for the original.

worshippers—one of several constantly bursting forth and battled long and hard by the Church fathers.

Egyptian Christians/Copts

From its inception, Egyptian Christianity was represented by those who readily equated Jesus with the Egyptian gods Osiris and Horus, the latter two symbolizing solar deities or aspects of the sun. Indeed, the Egyptian Christians or Copts repeatedly identified Osiris and Horus with Jesus in both myth and ritual, as the mythical lives of all three characters coalesced in numerous respects. As related by Egyptologist Sir Dr. E.A. Wallis Budge:

In Osiris the Christian Egyptians found the prototype of Christ, and in the pictures and statues of Isis suckling her son Horus, they perceived the prototype of the Virgin Mary and her Child.⁶⁹

This fact of identifying both Osiris and Horus—again, essentially sun gods—with Jesus is demonstrated thoroughly in my book *Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection*. For instance, as stated in *Christ in Egypt*:

Regarding the connection between the Egyptian religion, Gnosticism and Christianity, Dr. Wilson B. Bishai states:

...the Copts of Egypt during the early Christian centuries were known for their massive production of Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. This characteristic of the early Copts should not be surprising to us in light of the evidence of gnostic influence on the early Coptic Christian thought. The gnostics were literate people and well acquainted with ancient religions and mythology. As Christianity was spreading in Egypt, a group of these gnostic Christians apparently made an effort to tie old Egyptian myths to Christian beliefs.

...In this same regard, Dr. Reginald E. Witt provides further, *archaeological* evidence:

The fusion of Horus with Judaeo-Christian features can be exemplified in Gnostic gems from Egypt....

In the theology and art of Gnosticism Horus and Christ could easily be blended.... Aeon/Horus was born of the Virgin Isis on 6 January. Clearly in the Gnosticism which fringed Christian orthodoxy Horus and Christ could merge.⁷⁰

Demonstrating the remarkable ancient Horus-Jesus connection, one of the old Coptic spells to remove pains of childbirth and the stomach was "Jesus! Horus!" or just simply "Jesus Horus!"⁷¹

...In *Ancient Christian Mage: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, by Dr. Marven W. Meyer, a professor of Religious Studies at Chapman College, and Dr. Richard Smith, a professor at Claremont Graduate School, the authors report on a *crucifix* in the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo "with the crucified figure of Jesus together with a falcon (Horus)." This artifact demonstrates that identifying Horus with the crucified Jesus occurred even in antiquity.⁷²

⁶⁹ Budge, 48.

⁷⁰ Murdock, *CIE*, 229. Like Jesus, whose nativity has been placed on a number of days of the year, including January 6th and December 25th, so to was Horus said to have been born on these same dates, as he was the morning sun born *every day*. (See *CIE*, 79-119.)

⁷¹ Murdock, *CIE*, 297.

⁷² Murdock, *CIE*, 365.

Egyptian influence on Christianity is likewise discussed in *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* by Dr. Erik Hornung, a professor emeritus of Egyptology at the University of Basel, who remarks:

Notwithstanding its superficial rejection of everything pagan, **early Christianity was deeply indebted to ancient Egypt.** In particular, the lively picture of the ancient Egyptian afterlife left traces in Christian texts; thus, among the Copts, and later in Islam, we encounter a fiery hell quite like that of the Egyptians... The *descensus* [descent] of Jesus, which played no role in the early church, was adopted into the official Credo after 359, thanks to apocryphal legends that again involved Egypt. **Christ became the sun in the realm of the dead,** for his descent into the netherworld had its ultimate precursor in the nightly journey of the ancient Egyptian sun god Re...⁷³

This last part bears repeating: According to a respected modern Egyptologist, in ancient times, because of the Egyptian religion—

Christ became the sun in the realm of the dead.

And so on, through well over 500 pages of evidence in *Christ in Egypt* of the Horus-Jesus connection, wherein Christ is identified and essentially equated with Egyptian sun gods. Therefore, denials of the influence of Egyptian religion upon Christianity and the very early identification of Christ as the sun—a thousand and a half years before it supposedly surfaced in the world, as is erroneously claimed—have no foundation in truth.

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)

The relationship of Christianity to sun worship continued throughout the ages, as exemplified in book II of the *Scivias* by the female Christian saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), in which we find “seven visions” that describe “the redemption through Christ, as the Sun...”⁷⁴ In the 15th century, Marsilio Ficino, an Italian Neoplatonic-Christian philosopher, wrote an extensive essay on sun worship called *The Book of the Sun, or De Sole*. In the Preface to his book—written in a Catholic country by someone well aware of the Inquisitor toes he would be stepping on—Ficino expresses his purpose:

I am daily pursuing a new interpretation of Plato... Therefore when lately I come to that Platonic mystery where he most exquisitely compares the Sun to God Himself, it seemed right to explain so great a matter somewhat more fully, especially since our Dionysius the Areopagite, the first of the Platonists, whose interpretation I hold in my hands, freely embraces a similar comparison of the Sun to God.⁷⁵

As related in *Suns of God*, “In this statement, Ficino discusses two ancient sources: one from the 4th century BCE (Plato) and one from the 6th century CE (Pseudo-Dionysius), the latter of whom is a Christian, although, interestingly, Ficino considers him the ‘first of the Platonists,’ demonstrating the connection between Platonism and Christianity.”⁷⁶

In this same regard, the Neoplatonist Ficino declared himself to be “performing *Christian magic*,” but he was nonetheless “investigated for heresy by a papal

⁷³ Hornung, 73.

⁷⁴ Thiébaux, 320.

⁷⁵ Voss, 189.

⁷⁶ Acharya, *SOG*, 71.

commission in 1490."⁷⁷ Dr. David Chidester, a professor of Religious Studies at University of Cape Town, calls Ficino the "Christian magus."⁷⁸

Ficino provides an extensive comparison of God with the Sun. In fact, chapter IX of Ficino's book is entitled, "The Sun is the Image of God. Comparisons of the Sun to God," in which he remarks: "Having very diligently considered these things, our divine Plato named the Sun the visible son of Goodness itself. He also thought that the Sun was the manifest symbol of God, placed by God himself in this worldly temple."⁷⁹ Ficino further states:

According to Plato, [Socrates] called the Sun not God himself but the son of God...⁸⁰

As we can see, Ficino was very aware of the solar mythology at work in the religious world beginning centuries before and well into the common era.

The Son of God is the Sun of God

It is thus *Plato* (c. 428-c. 348 BCE) and/or *Socrates* (c. 469-399 BCE) in the fourth to fifth centuries prior to the common era who determined that *the son of God is the sun of God*, although, of course, the sun was likewise considered the son of one god or another much earlier in ancient Egypt and elsewhere as well. Naturally, this statement by Plato was made in Greek, so there appeared no natural *play on words* as occurs in English with "son" and "sun." Nevertheless, the motif of the "sun of God" being the "son of God" is pre-Christian, and there is no other way to express it in English.

Moreover, this sun-son word play has been noted many times previously in history by a variety of individuals, including English priest and poet Robert Southwell in the 16th century and English poet Richard Crashaw in the 17th century.⁸¹ English poet and preacher John Donne (1572-1631) and Welsh poet and priest George Herbert (1593-1633) likewise engaged in the son/sun pun as applied to Christ.⁸² In discussing Donne, Dr. Arthur L. Clements, a professor at Binghamton University, remarks that the "Son-sun pun" is "familiar enough."⁸³ Comparing Christ to the "day star," famous English poet John Milton (1608-1674) was aware of the "sun/son of God" analogy and "revel[ed] in the sun-son pun."⁸⁴ In his book about English poet Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), Dr. Nigel Smith, a professor at Princeton University, comments that "Jesus was also thought to have been referred to in Mal. 4:2 (thereby involving a pun on Sun/Son of God)..."⁸⁵ Puritan minister Edward Taylor (1642-1729) engaged in the same punning by describing Christ as "the onely [sic] begotten Sun that is in the bosom of the Father..."⁸⁶

Furthermore, in describing the actions of the Church fathers in adapting sun myths to Christianity, Thomas Ellwood Longshore declared in 1881, "They merely changed the visible 'Sun of God' for the invisible 'Son of God,' or for this personage they

⁷⁷ Chidester, 305. (Emph. added.)

⁷⁸ Chidester, 305.

⁷⁹ Voss, 202.

⁸⁰ Voss, 211.

⁸¹ Davies, G., 165.

⁸² Foxell, 8; Wilcox, 306.

⁸³ Clements, 71.

⁸⁴ Miller, D.M., 32.

⁸⁵ Smith, N., 42.

⁸⁶ Miller, D.G., 90.

called the 'Son of God'...⁸⁷ While addressing the Shakespearean character Petruccio's "arrogation of the son/sun pun" in "The Taming of the Shrew," Dr. Peter Holland, a professor of Shakespearean History at Notre Dame University, says that this play on words is "normally used to glorify Christ..."⁸⁸ In *An Introduction to English Grammar*, Dr. Sidney Greenbaum, a professor of English at University College London, comments, "Religious poetry traditionally puns Sun with Son, Christ the son of God..."⁸⁹ Dr. Stephen C. Behrendt, a professor of English at the University of Nebraska, called the pun "longstanding."⁹⁰ The sun-son play on words as applicable to Christ has also been deemed so "common" as to represent a "devotional pun."⁹¹

Obviously, this "devotional pun" was widely recognized centuries ago by the English-speaking intelligentsia and educated elite. Therefore, shallow criticisms of the statement that the son of God is the sun of God represent illogical straw men reflective of ignorance of this fact and should be dismissed as such. In reality, the repeated punning across several centuries proves once more that Christ was widely associated with the sun long before the 19th century. In any event, the idea of the sun as both God and the son of God predates the Christian era by centuries, and the ancient solar role was most obviously transferred first to Yahweh and then to his supposed son, the alleged Jewish messiah Jesus Christ.

The Solar Logos

As also discussed beginning in antiquity and continuing for many centuries, another Platonic concept clearly adopted into Christianity was the Logos or Word of God, likewise developed by the Jewish writer Philo, before it was applied to Christ. The Logos, as both Plato and Philo express it, is *solar* in nature.⁹² In this same regard, in his *Exhortation to the Heathen* (VI), Clement of Alexandria equates the Word with the "Sun of the soul."⁹³ When Christ becomes the Logos, he too is thus solar in nature. Concerning the solar Logos, in *Suns of God*, I write:

Josephus affirms the Logos's solar identification in his discussion of the menorah, or seven-branched candlestick, representing the sun in the middle surrounded by the moon and five planets, the central sun of which...was recognized by Philo as the Word of God. In Revelation/Apocalypse [1:13], Christ is depicted as the solar Logos in the middle of the "seven candlesticks or lamps," i.e., the menorah.⁹⁴

The equation of Christ with the sun, which we have seen proved to be an ancient concept from the very beginning of Christianity, is therefore appropriate, once again, because of his role as the solar Logos.

As concerns the enduring identification of Christ with the sun, librarian to Pope Leo X (1475-1521), Cardinal Tommaso Inghirami (1470-1516) equated Jesus with Apollo: "We have speeches by Inghirami in which he refers to Jesus as Apollo, Mary as Minerva, Gabriel as Mercury."⁹⁵ This statement is particularly interesting in light of the fact that in "The Pageant of Popes," English clergyman and satirist John Bale

⁸⁷ Longshore, 103.

⁸⁸ Holland, 91.

⁸⁹ Greenbaum, 182.

⁹⁰ Behrendt, 153.

⁹¹ See, e.g., Rowe, 252; Oberhaus, 79.

⁹² Davies, J.L., xxiv. Philo, "Who is the Heir of Divine Things" (53); Philo/Yonge, 299.

⁹³ Wilson, W., 70.

⁹⁴ Acharya, *SOG*, 474.

⁹⁵ Alexander, 60.

(1495-1563) made Pope Leo X exclaim, "It is well known to all ages how profitable this fable of Christ has been to us,"⁹⁶ possibly an indication of true papal insight and sentiment in consideration of Inghirami's speeches.

Concerning this ongoing solar scenario, also in the 16th century, Ignatius of Loyola (c. 1491-1556), founder of the Jesuits, experienced many "visions," including those in which "he saw Christ as the sun."⁹⁷

German Christian mystic Jakob Böhme (c. 1575-1624) likewise used Christ as the sun as one of his "great symbols."⁹⁸ As stated by Dr. Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, a professor of History at the University of Nevada: "Seventeenth-century metaphors consistently posited the Virgin as the moon and Christ as the sun."⁹⁹

Because the ideas were so prevalent among his congregation, the English puritan and theologian Richard Baxter (1615-1691) found it expedient to denounce the "heathenish ignorance" that Christ was the sun and the Church the moon.¹⁰⁰

In the 18th century, German scholar Paul Ernesti Jablonski/y (1693-1757), a professor of Theology at Frankfurt, likewise raised the issues of Yahweh, Jesus and the sun, in a multivolume study entitled, *Pantheon Ægyptiacum*.¹⁰¹

Charles Francois Dupuis (1742-1809)

Also in the 18th century, French scholar Charles Francois Dupuis, a professor at the Collège de France, produced his multivolume book "Origines de tous les cultes," in which he discussed astrotheology as the root of major religious concepts. In the English translation of various excerpts from this work, *The Origin of All Religious Worship*, Dupuis states:

Let us well bear in mind here, what we have proved in another place, that Christ has all the characteristics of the God Sun in his birth, or in his incarnation in the womb of a virgin, and that this birth arrives just at the same moment, when the ancients celebrated that of the Sun or of Mithras... The actual question now is, to show, that he has also the characteristics of the God Sun in his resurrection...¹⁰²

Dupuis calls Christians "those worshippers of the Sun under the name of Christ,"¹⁰³ while he later states that "the Christians have of the holy face of their God Sun, Christ...."¹⁰⁴

Dupuis also refers to "the Sun Christ in Palestine,"¹⁰⁵ and he discusses the Greek gods Dionysus/Bacchus and Hercules as being the "God Sun," saying:

...Should the reader be well convinced of this truth, he will then easily admit our explanation of the solar legend, known by the Christians under the title of the life of Christ, which is only one of the thousand names of the God Sun, whatever may be the opinion of his worshippers about his existence as a man, because it will not prove anymore than that of the worshippers of Bacchus, who made of him a conqueror and a

⁹⁶ Roscoe, 388.

⁹⁷ Fanning, 154.

⁹⁸ Damon, 360.

⁹⁹ Schwaller, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Baxter, 317.

¹⁰¹ Colenso, 317, et seq.

¹⁰² Dupuis, 243.

¹⁰³ Dupuis, 43.

¹⁰⁴ Dupuis, 96.

¹⁰⁵ Dupuis, 111.

hero. Let us therefore first establish as an acknowledged fact, that the Bacchus of the Greeks was merely a copy of the Osiris of the Egyptians...and worshipped in Egypt was the Sun.¹⁰⁶

Dupuis cites many ancient authorities to prove his points, including Diodorus Siculus, Chaeremon, Jamblichus/Iamblichus, Plutarch, Diogenes-Laertius, Suidas, Macrobius, et al.

Moreover, Dupuis has an entire chapter entitled, "AN EXPLANATION OF THE FABLE, IN WHICH THE SUN IS WORSHIPPED UNDER THE NAME OF CHRIST." In that chapter, he remarks:

...We shall also recognize there under the name of Peter, old Janus with his keys and his bark, at the head of the twelve Deities of the twelve months, the altars of which are his feet. We feel, that we shall have to overcome a great many prejudices, and that those, who agree with us, that Bacchus and Hercules are nothing else, but the Sun, will not easily agree, that the worship of Christ is nothing more, than the worship of the Sun.¹⁰⁷

As we have seen, many centuries previously Christian writer Pseudo-Clement identified the Christian 12 with the 12 months of the sun, and Clement of Alexandria related that Theodotus equated the apostles with the 12 signs of the zodiac, in the second century, long before Dupuis or any other "modern" writers.

Dupuis continues:

When we shall have shown—that the pretended history of a God, born of a Virgin at the winter solstice, who resuscitates at Easter or at the equinox of spring, after having descended into hell; of a God, who has twelve apostles in his train, whose leader has all the attributes of Janus; of a God-conqueror of the Prince of Darkness, who restores to mankind the dominion of Light, and who redeems the evils of Nature—is merely a solar fable, like all those, which we have analysed, it will be quite as indifferent, or of as little consequence to examine, whether there ever existed a man by the name of Christ, as it would be to enquire, whether some Prince was called Hercules, provided it will be conclusively demonstrated that the being, consecrated by worship under the name of Christ, is the Sun, and that the marvelousness of the legend or of the same poem, has that luminary for its object; because it would seem then to be proved, that the Christians are mere worshippers of the Sun...¹⁰⁸

The French scholar proceeds through many more pages of proof, specifically stating that "Christ is the Sun" and commenting:

Like the Christians, who suppose that their God Sun Christ had been fastened to a wooden cross, so have the Phrygians, being worshippers of the Sun under the name of Atys [Attis], represented him in his passion by a young man tied to a tree...¹⁰⁹

Dupuis also addresses the history of the contention for Christian sun worship:

We are not the only ones, nor the first, who have this idea of the religion of the Christians. Their apologist Tertullian, agrees, that from the earliest days of the introduction of this religion in the West, the more enlightened men, who had examined into it, pronounced it to be merely a sect of the Mithraic religion, and that the God of the Christians like that of the Persians, was the Sun. In Christianity there were sundry practices remarked, which betrayed that origin; the Christians never said their prayers, without facing the East, or that part of the World, whence the sun rises. All

¹⁰⁶ Dupuis, 116.

¹⁰⁷ Dupuis, 215.

¹⁰⁸ Dupuis, 217.

¹⁰⁹ Dupuis, 255.

their temples, or all their religious meeting houses were anciently facing the rising Sun. Their holy days in each week had reference to the day of the Sun, called Sunday, or the day of the Lord Sun.... All these practices derived their origin from the very nature of their religion.¹¹⁰

And so on, throughout his magnum opus—indeed, Dupuis’s entire work is designed to demonstrate the astrotheological underpinnings of religion in general and the solar mythology of Christianity in specific. Yet, as we have seen, Dupuis was certainly not the first to associate, identify or equate Jesus with the sun or with sun gods. As Russian philosopher Vladimir Sergeyevich Soloviev says, “The Christian church in its liturgy sang praise of Christ as the sun of truth many centuries earlier than Dupuis.”¹¹¹

Dupuis was succeeded also in the 18th century by French scholar Count Volney, who likewise put forth the case for Christ being the sun in his book *The Ruins of Empires*. Following Volney, Emperor Napoleon I (1769-1821) likewise questioned whether or not Jesus was a historical figure, as related by German theologian and missionary Dr. Albert Schweitzer:

It is well known that when, in October 1808, Napoleon was discussing Christianity with Wieland in Weimar he whispered in his ear that it was indeed an open question whether Jesus Christ had lived at all.... The emperor was probably alluding to Volney's writings, which he will have known, as he was personally acquainted with the author.¹¹²

In the 1820s, English clergyman Rev. Dr. Robert Taylor also wrote about Christ as the sun, paying for his insight with two prison terms for “blasphemy.” In more modern times, in 1925 German scholar and Catholic theologian Dr. Franz Joseph Dölger (1879-1940), a professor of Comparative Religion at the Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität, published a comprehensive study of “Christ as the sun in Christian antiquity” called *Sol salutis*, while Finnish scholar Dr. Yrjö Hirn (1870-1953) “mentions Christ as the sun and the Virgin as a cloud, citing this analogy by Bernard of Clairvaux [1090-1153] and Gualterius Wilburnus.”¹¹³ In his book *The Central Thought of God*, Chinese Christian preacher and church founder Rev. Witness Lee (1905-1997) identifies Christ as the sun created on the fourth day in the first chapter of Genesis.¹¹⁴ Many modern hymns and songs focus on the solar nature of both God and Christ, as does abundant imagery.

The Disciples are the 12 Hours, Months and Signs of the Zodiac

As we have seen, the identification of the 12 apostles with the months of the year and signs of the zodiac occurred beginning in ancient times. Furthermore, in the works of early Church father and saint Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-c. 236) we find a passage concerning the apostles seemingly straight out of Egyptian mythology:

He, the Redeemer, the Sun having risen from the bosom of the earth, showed the twelve apostles to be twelve hours. For the day reveals itself through them... And the twelve apostles as the twelve months have proclaimed the completed year, the Christ.

¹¹⁰ Dupuis, 266.

¹¹¹ Soloviev, 99.

¹¹² Schweitzer, 356.

¹¹³ Katz, 20.

¹¹⁴ Lee, 18.

And since day, sun and year are Christ, so must the apostles be designated the hours and the months.¹¹⁵

This remark recalls the numerous Egyptian depictions of the solar deities Re/Ra, Osiris and Horus with 12 "assistants" who frequently represent the 12 hours of the day or night.¹¹⁶ To this comment by Hippolytus, Michael Ladwein adds, "From the months only a small step further would have arrived at the signs of the Zodiac, but at the time only the Gnostics had taken it, with the church as a whole not following suit until the early Middle Ages."¹¹⁷

In his *Homilies on the Gospel according to St. John* (49:8), Augustine verifies this interpretation of Christ as the day and the apostles as the 12 hours thereof.¹¹⁸ Augustine's reasoning is based on the scripture at John 11:9, in which Jesus asks, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Commenting on this scripture, the African saint remarks, "Because, that He might show Himself to be the Day, therefore He chose *twelve* disciples. If I, saith He, am the Day, and ye the hours, do the hours give counsel to the Day?"¹¹⁹ In reality, the Gospel of John is highly Egyptian in character, as demonstrated in *Christ in Egypt*, which may explain the motif as being of Egyptian derivation.

Concerning the astrotheological history of Jesus and the 12, Ladwein further relates:

The relationship of the apostles to the signs of the Zodiac *in general* was first mooted in a remark by Clement of Alexandria about the Gnostic Theodotus... An early Christian pottery lamp in Geneva has the heads of the twelve apostles arranged around the central opening for the flame (=Christ as the sun). The sides of a medieval ivory reliquary in the abbey church of Quedlinburg shows the (unspecified) apostles with the Zodiac signs above. An ivory reliquary in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich is similar. On the front we see Christ between Cancer and Leo, i.e. as the sun in its most powerful at the summer solstice. There are specific associations in medieval literature, e.g. in the *Rota ecclesiastica*, a manuscript dating from the first half of the twelfth century, in the writings of the Catalan scholar Arnold of Villanova in the thirteenth century, in those of Agrippa of Nettesheim around 1500, and those of the Augsburg jurist Julius Schiller in the seventeenth century. In each case the combinations were different as was also the composition of the circle of twelve... In contrast to these arbitrary medieval combinations, E. Lenz has ventured a new and considerably more convincing "attempt based on natural sensitivity to link Thomas with the constellation of Gemini (he is after all called the 'twin' in the Gospels) and Judas with Scorpio."¹²⁰

As we have seen, this identification of the Christian 12 with the zodiac began in ancient times and continues to this day.

As summarized by Dr. Stephen C. McCluskey, professor of History at West Virginia University:

¹¹⁵ Ladwein, 78. Ladwein cites "Hippolytus, *Resutatio*, 6, 53," apparently a typo for *Refutatio*. No chapter 53 is found in book 6 of readily available English translations; however, this fact does not mean it does not exist in Greek originals. As demonstrated in *Christ in Egypt* and elsewhere, not a few unpleasant and inconvenient facts from antiquity have been censored and edited out of texts.

¹¹⁶ See the chapter "The Twelve Followers" in my book *Christ in Egypt*.

¹¹⁷ Ladwein, 78.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, 115.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Homilies*, II, 655.

¹²⁰ Ladwein, 127.

Since the Sun passes through the twelve signs of the zodiac in the twelve months of the year, the passing of the year was commonly indicated by the number twelve. For some early Christians, just as the Sun signified Christ so were his twelve apostles indicated by the twelve signs, the twelve months, or the twelve hours from sunrise to sunset.¹²¹

Jesus and the Sun Bird/Phoenix

The astrotheological significance of Christianity continues with other traditions and symbols. As demonstrated more thoroughly in my book *Christ in Egypt*, since the earliest of Christian times, Jesus Christ has been identified with the *sun bird* called the phoenix. To quote *CIE*:

...Jesus is equated with the phoenix in some of the oldest Christian literature, since the time of the early Church fathers such as Clement of Rome (d. c. 99 AD/CE), [when] the phoenix was very much representative of Christ's resurrection: "The phoenix is a still more marvellous symbol of the resurrection."...

In a Christian text from the second century called *The Physiologus* we read, "The phoenix assumes the role of our Savior, for when he came from heaven, spreading his two wings, he carried these full of sweet scent..." Interestingly, the Physiologus author adds a "three-day waiting period between the phoenix's death and its resurrection, further likening the bird to Christ."¹²²

The comparisons between Christ and the solar phoenix were many and continued for centuries, reflecting once more Jesus as the sun throughout history.

Christ the Sun in Art, Architecture and Symbols

As Christ has been depicted as the sun in Christian literature from early times onward, so too was he portrayed as the sun in art throughout the centuries, beginning at least as early as the 3rd to 4th century. A mosaic from that era (c. 320?) found in the mausoleum of the Julii under St. Peter's Basilica shows Christ as the Greek sun god Helios or Apollo, riding the quadriga chariot pulled by horses, a portrayal dubbed "Cristo Sole" or "Christ Sun" by its Italian excavators. Identified as one of the earliest Christian mosaics,¹²³ this "Cristo Sole" image is described by Dr. Susan Power Bratton, a professor at Baylor University:

An unusual pre-Constantinian mosaic in the Vatican Necropolis Mausoleum M depicts Christ as the sun god Helios. Rays of light emanate from a small nimbus, as his cloak flows behind him, and he seems to move ahead of his horses and chariot. The whole is on brilliant gold background laced with grape leaves. The circle of light around Christ's head or body, be it a halo, aureole, mandala, or nimbus, begins to appear in the mid-fourth century as a symbol of divinity. Christ as celestial, however, increases radically in importance through the fifth century, emerging as a major theme of medieval and Byzantine art....¹²⁴

Dr. Bratton also remarks that the this early mosaic represents "Christ as Apollo."¹²⁵

Rev. Dr. Rowan A. Greer, a professor of Anglican Studies at Yale University, likewise names the Cristo Sole mosaic as "an Apollo figure," stating:

¹²¹ McCluskey, 39.

¹²² Murdock, *CIE*, 426.

¹²³ Kleinhenz, 740.

¹²⁴ Bratton, 44.

¹²⁵ Bratton, 54.

Christ was often represented in ancient Christian art as an Apollo figure, and a remarkable mosaic depicting Christ as the Sun God, driving his four-horse chariot across the sky, has been preserved in the Vatican.¹²⁶

Rev. Dr. Greer specifically states that Jesus was *often* represented in early Christian art as Apollo, i.e., the *sun god*. In a section entitled, "Christ, the Risen Sun," John Matthews states, "Perceived similarities between the lives of Apollo and Christ helped shape later Christian traditions...."¹²⁷

Referring to the Cristo Sole image, the New Encyclopaedia Britannica describes it as "Christ-Helios":

An early instance of the use of gold for depicting light emanating from God is in a representation of Christ-Helios (Christ as the Sun God) in a 3rd-century mausoleum under St. Peter's at Rome.¹²⁸

Whether Apollo or Helios, the image is clearly that of Christ as a *sun god*, as long as 1700 years ago.

Much other art portrays Christ's solar nature, such as an image in the apse of the early church of Santa Pudenziana at Rome (c. 401-417 AD/CE), described by Bratton:

The entire scene at Santa Pudenziana is demonstratively solar. Christ with his gold nimbus looks like the sun rising above the rocky hill behind him. The twilight accentuates Christ as the source of light above the city. Christ in the sky or Christ as a glowing orb on the horizon does appear as a rare motif prior to Constantine's rule. The solar Christ is thus not entirely new in the fifth century.¹²⁹

In *The Secret Zodiac: The Hidden Art in Mediaeval Astrology*, published by Routledge, in discussing an image of the zodiac from the 10th century with the sun god at the center, English college professor Fred Gettings remarks:

Such diagrams should naturally lead us to suspect that in mediaeval literature (as in early Christian literature), the Sun would be linked with Christ himself. The English theologian and symbolist Alexander of Neckam developed this idea in a manuscript which was circulating widely at the same time as the San Miniato zodiac was being laid down. He pictured Christ as the Sun, and the faithful of the church as the Moon, receiving as a gift the light from the sun. In one way or another this idea of the "solar Christ" is one of the oldest in Christian literature, being mentioned even by the early Clemens.¹³⁰

In his popular book, English abbot Alexander of Neckam (1157-1217) revealed once again ideas that have remained in currency from the beginning of Christianity until the present day: To wit, linking the sun with Jesus. The zodiac in question with Christ as the sun in the center can be found in the Italian "Zodiac Church" at Florence called San Miniato, dating to the 13th century. The church is situated so that the sun's rays hit various aspects of its astrological imagery, which reminds one that there are many *architectural* features throughout Christendom over the centuries

¹²⁶ Greer, 10.

¹²⁷ Matthews, 45.

¹²⁸ *NEB*, XI, 180.

¹²⁹ Bratton, 44.

¹³⁰ Gettings, 34. Gettings was an eccentric figure in the art scene who studied the works of unorthodox and disparaged figures. In the "Introduction" to this book *The Secret Zodiac*, he writes:

"...It may be felt that I have been too liberal with my references to authorities, both ancient and modern. However, the fact is that I do not seek to argue fallaciously by what the mediaeval logicians called 'argument by authority' at all." (Gettings, 8.)

that likewise bespeak of Christian reverence for the sun, including numerous churches and cathedrals constructed to face the east and the rising sun.

Indeed, a study of this magnitude would require another volume, such as that produced by Dr. John L. Heilbron, professor of History and vice-chancellor at the University of California, Berkeley, entitled *The Sun in Church: Cathedrals as Solar Observatories*. Even this tome limits itself to four cathedrals, such is the abundance of Christian astrotheological architecture. As Dr. Heilbron explains, the movements of the sun were so important that it would be impossible to determine the time of Easter—Christ’s purported death and resurrection—without them, specifically aligning to the period of the vernal equinox. Hence, these cathedrals were built in order to follow precisely what is supposed to be the dictate of God as concerns the proper time for the Easter festivities, based on both solar and lunar cycles, i.e., the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox.¹³¹

In addition to mosaics, zodiacs and architecture are many other artifacts depicting Christ’s solar nature, such as the painting by Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430 – 1516) called “Christ Blessing,” about which Bratton remarks:

Although, Bellini does not show us the sun peeking above the horizon, golden rays emanate from Christ’s head. The swirl of the cloud parallels the delicate curls of Christ’s beard. Bellini integrates the human figure with the landscape to present a Christ who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of all things. He is the sun, the light of the world.¹³²

In the 19th century, English poet and painter William Blake (1757-1827) selected to illustrate the 14th canto of Henry Cary’s translation of Dante’s *Paradiso* “because it echoes his own vision of Christ as the sun.”¹³³ As related by Dr. Jeanne Moskal, a professor of English at UNC-Chapel Hill:

Cary’s diction identifies Christ himself as the sun; Blake explicitly cites that identification. Thus, the proper reading of the painting is not that Christ obscures these three suns, but that the sun’s human form is now recognizable, as Blake himself had recognized it....¹³⁴

Christ is depicted in Christian art not only as the sun itself but also as the sun in the precessional Age of Pisces, the fishes, which has been suggested to constitute the root of the fishy symbolism in the New Testament.¹³⁵ Concerning this motif of Christ and Pisces, Gettings states:

...the art-historical evidence suggests that the symbolism of the zodiac—ostensibly “pagan”—was indeed readily assimilated into early Christian theology and art...because a deal of the significance of the San Miniato symbolism rests precisely on the esoteric meaning inherent in the connection between Christ and Pisces.¹³⁶

Gettings further relates

That the Christ-fish should be linked with Pisces was almost taken for granted in the allegorizing mind of the mediaeval artist, and is attested to in remarkable esoteric

¹³¹ Heilbron, 4ff.

¹³² Bratton, 184.

¹³³ Moskal, 160.

¹³⁴ Moskal, 160.

¹³⁵ Gettings, 34.

¹³⁶ Gettings, 17.

imagery in such places as Chartres, where the two fishes of Pisces are transmuted into a single and unique anagogic image of the single fish of Christ.¹³⁷

Within the realm of Christian astrotheology we also find the motif of the Virgin Mary as the sky or moon, who gives birth to the sun, as was stated of the Egyptian goddess Isis and her solar son, Horus. Commenting on the Byzantine image of the Theotokos or "god-bearer" of Kiev called the "Virgin *Orans*," Dr. Joanna Hubbs, a professor of Russian Cultural History and Literature at Hampshire College, remarks, "Carrier of Christ as the sun in her breast, she is the sky goddess rising from the underworld."¹³⁸ In this regard, Dr. Hubbs continues:

In folklore, Mary is frequently associated with the act of birth and pictured as the dawn star opening the gates through which the solar disk emerges: the genetrix of the sun. Her mantle, like that of Isis, is the sky which covers the earth and her child, the sun, with a starry veil. As the dawn star and the moon goddess combined, Mary does not much reflect the power of the sun as she gives it birth and nurture....¹³⁹

Other expressions of Christianity's solar nature can be found in symbols such as the cross, described by Bratton:

Many Irish crosses, and Celtic cross in general, have a ring, a solar symbol, around the center of the cross.... On Irish high crosses, Christ on the cross is in the center of the circle. The dying Christ becomes the sun and also the ultimate source of light.¹⁴⁰

Also popular in Christian art are haloes, sun wheels and rose windows. Speaking of the rose window, Dr. Helmut Domke relates, "It was developed from the Romanesque wheel window, which symbolised Christ as the Sun."¹⁴¹ Indeed, there are many rose windows and sun wheels in Christian art and architecture, with a massive sun wheel, for example, in the middle of the Piazza San Marco at Vatican City. This sun wheel/dial, in fact, possesses as its gnomon an ancient Egyptian obelisk, such obelisks generally dedicated to the sun god, i.e., Re/Ra.¹⁴²

The Catholic communion wafer in the monstrance also represents Jesus's solar nature: "Christ as the sun and source of life has become the point, with the roundness of the wafer augmented by symbolic rays projecting from it."¹⁴³

Finally, Christian resting places highlighted hopes for future life with solar symbolism, much like their Egyptian predecessors had done for thousands of years:

Symbols of Christ as the sun illuminating and warming the souls and bodies of the faithful appear throughout New England on her gravestones...¹⁴⁴

The solar imagery attached to the Egyptian mortuary literature is pervasive and reveals a similar sentiment of the sun assisting in the afterlife transition.

Christian Astrotheological Holidays

The "Sun of Righteousness" and other such solar designations affected much Christian tradition, including holidays, which, of course, have likewise possessed

¹³⁷ Gettings, 89.

¹³⁸ Hubbs, 110.

¹³⁹ Hubbs, 110.

¹⁴⁰ Bratton, 66.

¹⁴¹ Domke, xxi.

¹⁴² Wilson, E., 269.

¹⁴³ Brown, 135.

¹⁴⁴ Ludwig, 51.

solar and astrotheological underpinnings, such as the very day of the Lord itself or *Sunday*, the same day when Christ was said to have resurrected.

Naturally, another solar holiday is the nonbiblical birth of Christ at the winter solstice, a "coincidence" not lost on various Church fathers. As remarked upon by theologian Dr. Philip Schaff, a professor of Church History and Biblical Literature at the German Reformed Theological Seminary, in his entry regarding "The Christmas Cycle":

Finally, the church fathers [e.g., Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Leo the Great, and others] themselves confirm the symbolical reference of the feast of the birth of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world, to the birth-festival of the unconquered sun,¹⁴⁵ which on the twenty-fifth of December, after the winter solstice, breaks the growing power of darkness, and begins anew his heroic career. It was at the same time, moreover, the prevailing opinion of the church in the fourth and fifth centuries, that Christ was actually born on the twenty-fifth of December...¹⁴⁶

The celebration of Christ's birthday at the winter solstice, usurping the long-held Pagan tradition of the rebirth of the sun god at that time, was not formalized until the fourth century with Emperor Constantine. However, the tradition dates back to at least as early as the middle of the third century, while a number of other birthdays were likewise posited for Lord Jesus, many of them also astrotheological in nature, representing special days in Pagan mythology as well.¹⁴⁷

As evidence of this earlier assignment of Christ's birth on the winter solstice, in "De pasch. Comp." (xix), Cyprian (d. 258) exclaims, "O quam praeclare providentia ut illo die quo natu est Sol...nasceretur Christus," which under its entry for "Christmas," *CE* translates as:

O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which that Sun was born...Christ should be born.¹⁴⁸

As concerns Christmas, Dr. Schaff further relates:

The Sun in the Christian Church and Art.—The Mithras-worship even exercised its influence upon the fixing of the Christian Christmas-festival in December. As the new birth of the sun-god was celebrated at the end of December, so, likewise, in Christ the new sun in the field of spiritual life was adored. Many Christian writers of older times speak of Christ as the sun of eternal salvation, to which the visible sun, with moon and stars, form the chorus.¹⁴⁹

Hence, we see that the determination of Christ's birthday had to do with the Pagan sun god Mithra being born at that time.

That this placement of Christ's birth at the winter solstice was a deliberate contrivance by the Church fathers is verified by Syrian bishop Jacob Bar Salibi (fl. 1154):

The reason why the Fathers changed this feast from 7 January to 25 December was, it is said, as follows. The heathen were accustomed on 25 December to celebrate the birthday of the sun and to light fires in honour of the day, and even Christians were invited to take part in these festivities. When the Doctors of the Church observed that

¹⁴⁵ Schaff notes: "*Dies or natales invicti Solis*. This is the feast of the Persian sun-god Mithras, which was formally introduced in Rome under Domitian and Trajan."

¹⁴⁶ Schaff, *HCC*, 396-397.

¹⁴⁷ See Acharya, *SOG*, 231 and *CIE*, 80-81.

¹⁴⁸ *CE*, III, 727.

¹⁴⁹ Schaff, *Religious Encyclopedia*, III, 2259.

Christians were being induced to participate in these practices, they decided to celebrate this day as the true anniversary of Christ's birth and to keep 6 January for the celebration of the feast of Epiphany...¹⁵⁰

In addition to Christmas, other Christian holidays that possess astrotheological or solar mythological significance include the 6th of January/Epiphany, Easter, St. John's Day, the Assumption of the Virgin and All Saint's Day.

Christ as the Sun in Native Traditions

The notion that the Christ-sun identification began with certain individuals in the 19th century has been proved to be completely false. This fact is further evidenced by the ready adoption of the motif by native cultures who were in effect sun worshippers. For example, the Canadian natives the Montagnais/Innu were related in 1627 as believing Jesus to be the sun.¹⁵¹ In this same regard, the Christianized Mexican natives the Nahua "combine the sun and Christ into a composite personality who is the masculine creative force in the Nahuatl universe."¹⁵² As related by anthropologist Dr. James M. Taggart—one of my professors at Franklin & Marshall College—in *Nahuatl Myth and Social Structure*:

The annual movement of the sun toward the north from its lowest point on the horizon at the winter solstice is concordant with the annual festival cycle. The major winter solstice ceremony celebrates the birth of Christ and the annual re-birth of the sun as it begins to move north bringing more heat and light with gradually longer and warmer days. The annual movement of the sun along the horizon is analogous to the movement of the sun during the 24-hour period, so that the winter solstice is to the summer solstice as midnight is to noon. The climactic moment of the Christmas celebration—a procession carrying the Christ child from the house of the *mayordomo* (ritual sponsor) to the church—occurs at the time of the day (midnight) analogous to the corresponding time of the year (winter solstice). Other major festivals fall on or near other major events in the solar year. The Easter celebration occurs near the vernal equinox; the festival in honor of San Juan [St. John] occurs just after the summer solstice; and All Saints' Day in honor of the dead is near the autumnal equinox.¹⁵³

As we can see here, the "Catholic" festivals in the Native Mexican culture are properly placed within their astrotheological context.

In this same regard, concerning the use of the "sun as a metaphor for Christ," Mesoamerican archaeologist Dr. E. Christian Wells, an associate professor of Anthropology at the University of South Florida, says, "Imagery of Christ as the sun that would illuminate the way to spiritual salvation abounds in sixteenth-century Christian doctrinal literature (Burkhart 1988)."¹⁵⁴ "Burkhart" refers to anthropologist Dr. Louise M. Burkhart of the University of Albany, who presented Catholic-Nahua sun worship in "Christ as the Sun in Sixteenth Century Nahua-Christian Texts," cataloguing "[d]octrinal texts used in the evangelization of the Aztecs refer to Christ in solar terms."¹⁵⁵ Dr. Burkhart also wrote a paper entitled, "The Solar Christ in

¹⁵⁰ Childs, 30

¹⁵¹ Bailey, 134.

¹⁵² Taggart, 57.

¹⁵³ Taggart, 57-58.

¹⁵⁴ Wells, 120.

¹⁵⁵ American Anthropological Association, 95.

Nahuatl Doctrinal Texts of Early Colonial Mexico.”¹⁵⁶ In this latter work, Burkhart remarks:

The friars who ministered to the Nahua (Aztec) Indians incorporated into their Nahuatl teachings Old World symbolism which used the sun as a metaphor or type for Christ... Indians today view Christ as a solar deity; Christian teaching may be one source of this identification.¹⁵⁷

Citing the work of anthropologists Dr. Gary H. Gossen, Dr. Eva Hunt, Dr. James Taggart and Dr. Evon Vogt, Burkhart also relates, “It is widely known that present-day Mesoamerican Indians view Christ as a solar deity...For Christ to become identified with the sun was a logical response...”¹⁵⁸ It may be surprising to many to realize that it is *widely known* that the Central Americans to this day perceive Jesus as a “solar deity” or *sun god*. Burkhart continues:

The late-medieval Christ had obvious solar characteristics, some of which derived directly from Old World solar cults....¹⁵⁹

She next explores at length the texts used by the Christian monks in order to teach the natives about Christianity and Christ, using various solar scriptures and symbols. As concerns the efforts of the Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590), Burkhart relates that he referred to Christ as *teotonatiuh* in the Aztec or Nahuatl language, a phrase which is supposed to convey the subtleties of “divine sun” but which “has the effect of making Christ into a sun god or, more literally, god-sun.”¹⁶⁰ As Burkhart further shows, various doctrinal texts designed to proselytize the natives are loaded with solar and astrotheological imagery, including one about John the Baptist in which he is compared to the planet Venus, “in Nahuatl the ‘great star’...which goes before the sun, informing people that the great illumination, the sun, is about to rise.”¹⁶¹ Under such circumstances and in consideration of the natives’ previous sun worship, it is understandable that to this day they identify Jesus with the sun.

Burkhart concludes:

The preceding discussion has shown that the Christ-sun figure was active in the thinking of some of the most influential friars of early colonial Mexico....

Christ as the friars presented him was deity like the sun, or indeed was the sun in some sacred sense... It is possible that some Indians took the church’s teaching to mean that Christ and the sun were the same being.... the colonial literature does provide one historical precedent for the Christ-sun of today’s Mesoamerican peoples.¹⁶²

Adding to these contentions, in *The Transformation of the Hummingbird: Cultural Roots of a Zinacantan Mythical Poem*, anthropologist Dr. Eva Hunt (1934-1980), a professor at Boston University, describes a colonial Mexican image of “Christ as the sun,” with a “collar of thorns,” as opposed to a typical crown, in line with the “circle of rays with which prehispanic peoples framed the sun’s face.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁶ *Ethnohistory*, v. 35, no. 3 (Summer, 1998), pp. 234-256.

¹⁵⁷ Burkhart, 234.

¹⁵⁸ Burkhart, 235.

¹⁵⁹ Burkhart, 236.

¹⁶⁰ Burkhart, 245.

¹⁶¹ Burkhart, 249. Burkhart also relates, “This association of John the Baptist with Venus was used in sixteenth-century Spain as well...” (Burkhart, 250.)

¹⁶² Burkhart, 252.

¹⁶³ Hunt, 142.

Other native cultures—uninfluenced by anything other than the Christian church in one form or another—likewise perceived Christ as the sun and Christianity as another permutation of the ancient solar religion they were already following before their conquest and subjugation under Christian rule. Speaking of native traditions fusing Christian divines with the sun, Dr. Frank Graziano, a professor at Connecticut College, relates:

The interaction of biblical imagery and indigenous traditions resulted in syncretic composites that endured for centuries. Unorthodox iconography in New Mexico was still depicting God the Father with a sun in his chest well into the nineteenth century. Some modern Maya use “our father-sun” in reference to a syncretic paternal deity, the Aymara of Oruru and Potosi couple God the Father with the sun, and the fusion of Inti and Christian deity among other Andeans yields the untroubled admission that “Jesus Christ and the sun are the same thing.” The eucharist displayed and paraded in the sunlike monstrosity, sometimes called the *sol* (sun) in Spanish, likewise evokes Inti among modern Andeans. After conquest aspects of Inti Raimi (Festival of the Sun) were assimilated to the Christian celebration of Corpus Christi, with the mystical body of the quasi-solar Christ now processed where once the mummified Sons of the Sun had been....¹⁶⁴

Speaking of various monks who called themselves the “Sons of the Sun,” Dr. Graziano further states:

The friars’ posture as Sons of the Sun could claim a measure of unintended legitimacy insofar as the Christian deity, like the principal deity of the Incas (Inti) and Aztecs (Huitzilipochtli), was solar. The many Christian tropes constructing a solar deity, from God-the-Father’s emanation of heavenly rays to representation of Christ as the sun that never sets, have antecedents in ancient Egypt.¹⁶⁵

A “trope” is a figure of speech such as a metaphor, and we note here that Graziano says there were *many* such tropes concerning the Christian divinity as a “solar deity” or *sun god*.

Conclusion

Far from being a “modern” conspiracy contrived by various shady globalists, the equation of Christ with the sun and the solar nature of Christianity were obvious to the early Pagans and Christians alike, based on the Bible, writings of Church fathers, and Christian traditions and artifacts. Summarizing the various solar aspects of Christianity, Dr. Zerubavel states:

Early references to Christ as the sun, the prevalence of his sunlike halo in Christian art, and the Church’s decision to fix the commemoration of the Nativity on December 25 (a day traditionally celebrated by sun-worshippers as the annual “birth” of the sun following the winter solstice) all seem to point to some possibly “solar” origin of Christianity.¹⁶⁶

In a section entitled “The Christian Cult of the Sun,” Matthews likewise encapsulates the solar nature of Christianity:

The influence of the Roman sun cult on Christianity is beyond dispute. In 200 C.E., the theologian Clement of Alexandria described Christ as the sun driving his chariot across the sky, but the association of the sun with the Christian god was not confirmed until the reign of Emperor Constantine, who was a devout follower of Sol Invictus....

¹⁶⁴ Graziano, 200.

¹⁶⁵ Graziano, 199-200.

¹⁶⁶ Zerubavel, 25.

It seems likely that Constantine identified Christ with Sol Invictus. As a result, images of Sol, Mithras, and Apollo began to be integrated into Roman religious practice. The birthday of Mithras, December 25th, was adopted as the date of the nativity of Christ, and the parallels between the stories of these older gods and Christ were emphasized. Christian altars began to be oriented toward the East, as they had been in pagan sun temples. The new Christian theurgy was full of solar imagery, describing Christ as the sun, blazing a trail across the heavens and into the hearts of his followers.¹⁶⁷

Although much evidence has been provided here, there remains significantly more about the solar origins of Christianity and the solar nature of Jesus Christ beginning from the earliest times to the latest. Suffice it to say that this equation did not begin or end in the 19th century with any particular group or individual but, rather, has a long history within Christian tradition itself, as we can see proved abundantly here and elsewhere.¹⁶⁸

In the end, we need to ask ourselves: Is it more scientifically plausible that 2,000 years ago *the* God of the cosmos took birth through the womb of a virgin as a Jewish man who walked on water, performed miracles, raised the dead, resurrected himself from death and ascended into heaven—or could it be that this tale is a reworking of older myths in currency around the known world of the time?

¹⁶⁷ Matthews, 44.

¹⁶⁸ See, e.g., my books *The Christ Conspiracy*, *Suns of God* and *Christ in Egypt*.

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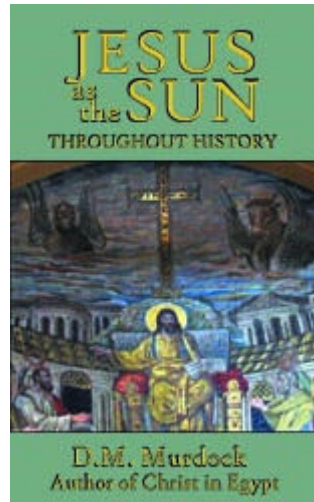
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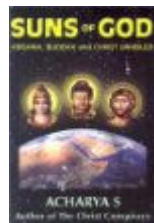
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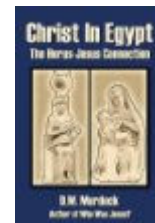
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